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FOR MORE INFORMATION

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**Governor proclaims Sept. 21 – 27 as
“Deaf Awareness Week”**

OLYMPIA – Gov. Chris Gregoire joins governors across the United States and world leaders in proclaiming Sept. 21 – 27 as Deaf Awareness Week. This week recognizes a rich deaf culture with its own unique traditions, dialects and sense of humor.

In our state, there are approximately 506,000 individuals with a hearing loss, including 12,600 individuals who are deaf or deaf and blind. The number is increasing as the baby boom population experiences hearing loss associated with aging.

“The Governor’s proclamation is an excellent opportunity to increase public awareness about the deaf as a people. Misconceptions can become barriers and it is through awareness we can remove these barriers,” said Eric Raff Director of the Department of Social Services Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

“Local businesses, government and nonprofit organizations realizing barriers exist can also obtain free technical assistance from a regional service center to become more accessible,” adds Raff.

According to the National Center for Disease Control, 40 percent of people over 65 and 80 percent of people over 85 have hearing loss.

Technology is one tool the Office of Deaf and Hard of Hearing uses to provide resources for its deaf, deaf-blind and hard-of-hearing clients. Telecommunication services and devices such as video conferencing, text telephones (also called TTY), and text messaging and are making communication easier for people who are deaf or hard of hearing.

“We encourage deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind and speech impaired people and their families to visit one of our Regional Service Centers [Regional Service Centers](#) or the Office of Deaf and Hard of Hearing.” Contact ODHH for information at: (360) 902-8000 Voice/TTY (800) 422-7930 Voice/TTY, Email Address: odhh@dshs.wa.gov

(A PDF is attached that offer county census information on people who are deaf and hard of hearing in Washington.)

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